paid Rs. 170 crores as excess reimbursement to the Arunachal Pradesh Government in just one year, against transportation subsidy for rice;

(b) whether it is a fact that the length of motorable roads has increased, but the FCI subsidy has increased instead of decreasing;

(c) if so, whether Government have made any investigations in this regard; and

(d) if so, the action proposed in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) A special audit, by a team from Food Corporation of India (FCI), of the reimbursements made to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh under the Hill Transport Subsidy Scheme has reported that during the years 2002-03 and 2003-04 an amount of Rs. 193.52 crores was paid by the FCI to the State Government in excess of the permissible payments under the Scheme.

(b) The higher transport subsidy claim is reported by the State Government on account of various factors *viz.* upward revision of transportation costs and increase in offtake of foodgrains over the past few years.

(c) and (d) Besides deputation of a special Audit Team of FCI to Arunachal Pradesh to examine the records of payments made under the scheme, the Central Vigilance Commission has also been requested to conduct an enquiry into the matter. The FCI has also been requested to fix responsibility and initiate suitable vigilance proceedings against guilty officers.

Consumer Protection

523. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the steps Government are taking for better consumer protection;

(b) whether steps have been taken to enhance the effectiveness of working of Central Consumer Protection Council;

(c) the status of the various working groups constituted under his Ministry; and

(d) whether a National Consumer Policy is proposed to be framed; if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) The Government has taken the following important steps for better consumer protection;

(i) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted to better protect the interest of the consumers. The Act has been amended in the years 1991,1993 and 2002 thereby widening the scope of the Act with a view to facilitate quicker disposal of complaints, enhancing the capability of redressal agencies, strengthening them with more powers and streamlining the procedures for better functioning.

(ii) The Consumer Protection Rules, 1987 were also amended in 2004 & 2005 and the Consumer Protection Regulations were framed and notified in 2005 for increasing the effectiveness of functioning of the consumer grievance redressal agencies.

(iii) To supplement the efforts of the States/UTs for strengthening the infrastructue in the newly created District Fora & State Commissions, the Central Government has released an amount of Rs. 10.20 crores during 2004-2005.

(iv) A scheme for "computerization and computer networking of consumer forums in the country" amounting to Rs. 48.64 crores has been launched in 2004-2005 through National Informatics Centre (NIC) as a turn key project to be completed in three phases over three years upto 2006-2007. This scheme aims to provide IT. solutions to achieve e-governance, transparency and efficiency in the working of the consumer fora for time bound redressal.

(v) A toll-free National Consumer Helpline No. 1600114000 has been launched to provide guidance to consumers for redressal of their grievances and to provide information en vital issues concerning the consumers. This has been set up in collaboration with University of Delhi. Also a Consumer on line Resource and Empowerment (CORE) Centre has been set up in collaboration with the Consumer Coordination Council for providing e-counselling to consumers including handling of consumer complaints.

(vi) In order to educate the consumers of their rights and to make them vigilant, multimedia publicity programmes .have been stepped up throughout the country.

(b) The existing provisions of the Cental Consumer Protection Council (CCPC) is considered to be effective enough to meet the objectives of the council.

(c) On the recommendation of the CCPC in its 23rd meeting held on 16.7.2003, six Working Groups were constituted. Status of these Working Groups have been indicated in a Statement at Statement (see Below).

(d) Yes Sir, The Central Government had constituted a Working Group under the chairpersonship'of Principal Secretary, Co-operation, Food & Consumer Protection, Government of Tamil Nadu to frame a draft national Consumer Policy. The Working Group had submitted a draft National Consumer Policy Document, which was circulated to all States/UTs for comments. The suggestions received from the States/ UTs were considered by the Working Group & the draft policy document has been submitted to the Government.

Statement

Working Groups constituted as per decision taken at the 23rd meeting of the CCPC held on 16-7-2003

SI. No	Name of the Working Group	Status
1.	Food Safety	Constituted on 10.10.2003 Recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group have been forwarded to the MHFW and MFPI for appropriate action.
2.	Counterfeit, Fake, Spurious, Contraband products	Constituted on 12.1.2004 1st meeting held on 30.9.2004
3.	Consumer Health & Safety concerning Tobacco &Tobacco Products	Constituted on 8.1.2004 Recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group have been forwarded to the concerned Ministries/ Deptts. for appropriate actions.
4.	Drugs, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices/ Equipments	Constituted on 7.1.2004 Recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group have been forwarded to the concerned Ministries/ Deptts. for appropriate action.

SI. N	Name of the Working Group	Status
5.	Misleading Advertisements	Constituted 1.1.2004 1st meeting held on 11-5-2004. The report of Working Group is awaited.
6.	To formulate New Acts and to suggest amending in the Consumer Protection Act	Constituted on 16.1.204 Three meetings held so for. A Sub group was formed to examine suggestions received from the public/experts etc. on amendments to the Consumer Protection Act. The sub-group met five times and has submitted its report to the Working Group.

Production of Sugar

†524. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that production of sugar has been decreasing constantly in the country for the last few years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the stock of sugar in the country in October, 2004;

(d) the assessment regarding production of sugar in the country during sugar production year of 2004-05;

(e) the assessment made about the consumption of sugar in the country;and

(f) whether it is a fact that surplus stock of sugar was available in the country during the sugar year of 2004-05?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Production of sugar in the country declined in 2003-04 and 2004-05 sugar seasons because of drought and wooly aphids pest infestation in major sugar producing states.

(c) The stock of sugar in the country on October 1,2004 is estimated at 85 lakh tonnes (provisional).

(d) The production of sugar from sugarcane in the country in 2004-05 sugar season is estimated at 130 lakh tonnes.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi,